

PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION 1

# Welcome!

**Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly  
on Municipal Amalgamation**

**VICTORIA  
SAANICH** **CITIZENS'  
ASSEMBLY**

[victoriasaanich.ca](http://victoriasaanich.ca)

# Peter MacLeod

**Chair, Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly  
on Municipal Amalgamation**

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SAANICH** **CITIZENS'  
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**We acknowledge that this land is the traditional territory of the Lekwungen Peoples, specifically the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the WSÁNEĆ Peoples, who have a deep connection with these lands and waters in what is now known as Victoria and Saanich, British Columbia.**

We also acknowledge that Citizens' Assemblies operate within a framework that is a product of colonial systems of governance. These systems have historically excluded and marginalized the voices of the original stewards of these lands.

This is why the Assembly is committed to listening, learning, and engaging with Indigenous Peoples and communities in a manner that respects their inherent rights and treaties.

The Assembly will work to honor the land, respect all its peoples, and contribute to the healing and strengthening of our communities for generations to come.

# Agenda

- What is a Citizens' Assembly?
- This Assembly's mandate and origins
- The Assembly Secretariat and Chair
- The role of the Advisory and Oversight Committee
- How members will be recruited and selected
- When the Assembly will take place
- How you can get involved
- Your questions

# What is a Citizens' Assembly?

A Citizens' Assembly is a type of long-form deliberative process where a demographically representative group of randomly selected volunteers study an issue in order to make one or more consensus recommendations to government on behalf of a wider community.

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Citizens' Assembly sometimes go by different names: Citizens' Conventions, Citizens' Juries, or Reference Panels.

**Citizens' Assemblies began in British Columbia twenty years ago!**

Today there have been almost 1,000 assemblies that have taken place around the world. This movement is called the 'deliberative wave' and has been studied by the OECD. Since 2004, there have been more than 50 Citizens' Assemblies and Reference Panels in Canada. This will be the fifth in British Columbia.

# What is a Citizens' Assembly?



The diagram illustrates the three stages of a Citizens' Assembly. It consists of three green circles arranged horizontally. The first circle is labeled 'Mandate', the second 'Civic Lottery', and the third 'Learning and Deliberation'. The circles are set against a background of light blue geometric shapes, including a large triangle at the top right and a large semi-circle at the bottom right.

**Mandate**

**Civic  
Lottery**

**Learning and  
Deliberation**



# This Assembly's mandate and origins

| COMMUNITY OPINION QUESTION:   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| <i>"Are you in favour of spending up to \$250,000 for establishing a Citizens' Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of the amalgamation between the District of Saanich and the City of Victoria?" Y/N</i> |                       |
|   | Number of Valid Votes |
| YES   | 16,852                |
| No  | 13,274                |

The Assembly's mandate flows from a community question asked during the 2018 municipal election. Following the affirmative result in both Victoria and Saanich, councillors from both municipalities developed a terms of reference to guide this process.

# **This Assembly's mandate and origins**

The Assembly is mandated by the District of Saanich and the City of Victoria to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of the amalgamation between the District of Saanich and the City of Victoria.

**Specifically, the Assembly will:**

- a. Identify common aspirations for good local governance to provide a basis for evaluating costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation and status quo of the municipalities relative to their current independent status.
- b. List the issues which the Assembly believes needs to be resolved for amalgamation to merit consideration, including issues related to the implementation and integration of the municipalities under amalgamation.

After weighing the evidence and considering what it believes are the best interests of both municipalities, the Assembly will strive to achieve a consensus recommendation on whether and under what conditions the municipalities should amalgamate.

# What happens if the assembly recommends amalgamation?

The Assembly's role is to make a consensus recommendation to both Councils concerning whether and under what conditions the municipalities should amalgamate.

If the Assembly recommends amalgamation, then both municipalities have committed to deliberating on this outcome, and work with the Province to initiate a public referendum.

If residents from both municipalities vote in favour of amalgamation, the plan would still require the provincial government's approval.

# The Assembly's Nine Principles

Openness and Transparency

Accountability and Legitimacy

Effective Representation

Accessibility

Independence

Well-Informed

Balance

Collaborative Decision-Making

Respect

# The Assembly Secretariat and Chair

The Secretariat is run by MASS LBP, a democracy organization working across Canada to popularize deliberative processes. Our organization was selected by the municipalities following a competitive tendering process.

The Secretariat is responsible for the design, execution and communications of the Assembly.

Assembly Chair: Peter MacLeod  
Lead facilitator: Richard Johnson

Project manager: Chris Ellis  
Program developer: Sarah Yaffe

# The Advisory and Oversight Committee

We will be appointing an Advisory and Oversight Committee to provide advice to to the Assembly Chair concerning the process the Assembly will follow and its curriculum. It will also respond to any concerns from Assembly members related to the conduct and impartiality of the Assembly itself. The Advisory and Oversight Group will be composed of six members. Two of these members will reside in Saanich, two will reside in Victoria, and two will reside outside of these municipalities.

We expect to announce the members of the committee later this month.

# How members will be recruited and selected

On April 3rd, we will mail approximately 10,000 invitation letters to randomly selected homes throughout Saanich and Victoria. Each letter has a unique code which allows the recipient to register their name as a potential volunteer.

On May 22, 2024, the 48 members of the Citizens' Assembly will be randomly selected from the pool of registered volunteers using a type of blind draw called a Civic Lottery.

# How members will be recruited and selected

The Civic Lottery will be stratified to ensure that the Citizens' Assembly broadly matches the demography of Victoria and Saanich. Given the differences in population, 27 seats on the Assembly will be reserved for Saanich residents and 21 seats will be reserved for Victoria residents.

The Civic Lottery will also weigh factors like gender, age, local geography and housing status, as well as ensuring broad diversity and the participation of Indigenous residents.



# When will the Assembly take place?

The Assembly will meet for the first time on Saturday, September 21st. Seven additional meeting will be held, with the final meeting concluding April 5th, 2025.

Four public roundtable meetings will also be scheduled, where residents can meet and converse with members of the assembly. We will also issue an interim report concerning the Assembly's work as well as the technical report in December 2024.

# Quick facts

Canada Post randomly selects which households will receive a letter

More than 25 different presenters will be invited to speak to the Assembly, based on a detailed curriculum that will be developed with the assistance of our Advisory and Oversight Committee. These presentations will be posted to our website.

The members of the Assembly will be cumulatively volunteering 3,500 session hours to their work.

An independent firm will produce a detailed technical report that will examine the costs, and benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation and identify the implications of different governance models as well as the impact on integrating different municipal functions and services like engineering, public safety, finance, planning, and human resources.

# How can you get involved

- ☐ If you receive an invitation, be sure to volunteer!
- ☐ Attend a public roundtable meeting
- ☐ Make a written submission to the Assembly
- ☐ Review materials and presentations made to the Assembly

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**—END—**

File Information:

- Presentation Delivered on February 1st, 2024 from 7:00 pm.m to 8:00 p.m. PST.
- PDF posted on February 2nd, 2024
- Fixed missing word on slide 18.